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**GLOBAL PROCESSES AND ITS EFFECTS  
ON LATIN AMERICA  
POLYCENTRIC VS PERTURBED WORLDS**

*The capacity of capitalism to abstractly 'solve the problem of African development' could be discussed ad infinitum. Concrete capitalism, such as actually exists, that is, globalized, not only has failed to 'solve' this problem (which it created) over the last 150 years (or even over the last 400 years since the slave trade), but envisages nothing for the next 50 years. The challenge will therefore only be taken up by the African peoples, the day that the necessary popular alliances enable them to delink (déconnexion) their development from the demands of transnationalization.*

Samir Amin (1987)

THE SPANISH-SPEAKING WORLD is celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Quixote*, published in 1605. The book marks Europe's transformation from the old feudal order to a new financially driven system of accumulation. Cervantes' vision of the new times was ex-

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tremely sharp. Let me share with you a dialogue between Don Quixote and Sancho his squire.

Fortune is arranging matters for us better than we could have shaped our desires ourselves, for look there, friend Sancho Panza, where 30 or more monstrous giants present themselves, all of whom I mean to engage in battle and slay, and with whose spoils we shall begin to make our fortunes; for *this is righteous warfare, and it is God's good service to sweep so evil a breed from the face of the earth.*

–What giants? –Panza responds.

–Those thou seest there –answers his master– with the long arms, and some have them nearly two leagues long.

Look, your worship –says Panza– what we see there are not giants but windmills, and what seem to be their arms are the sails that turned by the wind make the millstone go.

Undeterred, Don Quixote spurs his trusty Rocinante to a shambling gallop, only to come to grief as the windmill turns, breaking his spear and tossing rider and mount to the ground.

Quixote's words sound so familiar 400 years later when world leaders speak of "righteous wars" and the need to "sweep so evil breed from the face of the earth". (China Daily News, 2005).

So-called globalization is not so new. We can track it down to at least since *Quixote's* first edition. However, the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century corporate world globalization has spurred a set of new questions. According to Wood (2003) the world state system –within which globalization keeps growing– is very much a necessity, with its complex institutional apparatuses and its apparent sovereignty. This is the context in which "New Imperialism" faces all its contradictions and defies conflicting interests. On the other hand, for authors like Hardt and Negri (2001), the Nation-State is obsolete, belonging to the past.

At this juncture we will present the ever expanding capitalist system and its close ties to the existence of the Nation-State. After exploring the notions associated with the Nation-State we will examine their impact on the XXI Century. We are interested in the possibilities for autonomous political organizations to flourish among peoples of over one half of humanity. What obstacles can be foreseen, and what challenges confront the alternatives. Do the alternatives push us in the direction of delinking? Does delinking have a special relationship with revolution? What are the historical delinking experiences? We will analyze some of the more recent thesis developed in the US to confront these alternatives, specifically to contain future delinking processes. We will close with some concluding remarks on Latin America.

## THE NATION STATE SYSTEM

According to Wood, (2000) the capitalist world system in the early XXI Century has to confront the growing disparity between the rich and poor regions. To conserve the present world order, a result of over 100 years of on-going conflicts and struggles, more violence and force will top the agenda. Arrighi (2003) believes that we are in a period of transition, a period of turbulence<sup>1</sup>. However, Hardt and Negri foresee a new world order based on Empire, a State capable of concentrating military and ideological (hegemony) power over other lesser States and political entities.

In the upper-most echelons of US foreign policy, world order and containment has been its priority for decades. However, as we shall examine, emphasis and direction change according to new world demands. These challenges to the present world order require solutions. For some US analysts world order has to be “perturbed” on a permanent basis. The proposal entails a hierarchic world with a solid center and its periphery. The new world order also must have a “semi-periphery” committed to the global rules.

The proposal underscores the need to “perturb” those countries or regions on the periphery that have any delinking tendencies. Quoting Quixote, “this is righteous warfare, and it is God’s good service to sweep so evil a breed from the face of the earth”.

How and when will this period of “turbulence” come to an end? Will the outcome be a perturbed self-centered Empire ruling over many immature Nation-States? Or will a “new imperialism” emerge with some new and some old “global players” fighting over control of the resources within the boundaries of Nation-States? Or can a polycentric world with multiple regional economic and cultural autonomous expressions at the Nation-State level replace what has been centuries of confrontation?

## DELINKING AND REVOLUTION

The appearance of the Nation-State is a product of capitalist development. The Capitalist unequal rhythm of expansion create a Nation-State system full of contradictions. These conflicts have been closely examined on two distinct levels. Firstly, conflicting interests between more and less developed countries (that are identified as Nation-States). These contradictions lead to the subordination of the weaker countries. Wallerstein and Arrighi (1989) set these relations in a world system context divided between center and periphery.

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1 “If the system eventually breaks down, it will be primarily because of the US resistance to adjustment and accommodation” (Arrighi, 2003).

At a second level, conflicts arise among the core states whose capitalist expansion tends to clash over control of cheap labor and natural resources. Modern capitalist imperialism is a consequence of uneven growth and expresses itself through financial competition and military confrontation.

Marxists up until early 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw capitalist relations spreading evenly worldwide. However, Bolsheviks criticized this view saying that imperialism would not allow less developed countries to reach full capitalist development. The only alternative open to these countries was to delink from capitalist relations and start building alternative strategies for development.

The Marxist view of social revolution, a product of internal capitalist contradictions, was enriched and, in fact, transformed by what was called “Leninism”. Revolution was not only the result of reaching a ripe-old capitalist State ready to fall, it could also be understood as breaking away from dominant capitalist relations. The delinking process was a necessity precisely due to the absence of any feasible mature capitalist development.

A long debate ensued within the Marxist ranks pitting the “one country” thesis against a “world revolution” outlook. The valuable lessons deriving from these ideological confrontations can be summarized in a better understanding of capitalist underpinnings. Gramsci’s critique of lineal development, French structuralism, World Systems, and Latin American Dependency theory, among others, broke new grounds in this context.

World Systems theory centers on these processes that open paths for countries to transit from center to periphery, and *vice versa*. It develops the new notion of semi-periphery to acknowledge the existence of an intermediate space. In a way it leans towards criticism of Marx’s original views on capitalist development.

Marx’s theory on a capitalist crisis based on a tendency towards falling profit rates, feeding territorial expansion and regional domination, is overcome through political manipulation and the extraction of surpluses from non value (productive) sources. These alternatives are shrinking in the wake of a diminishing work force and the destruction of the environment. Capitalism has shown resilience through inclusive political regimes (social democrats and /or Welfare States), as well as exclusive policies both at the Center and the Periphery through military takeovers of cheap labor reserves and natural resources.

Among the early writings on imperialism –centered on the dangers of war, financial concentration, and its periodization– little attention was dedicated to the growing polarization of the international community. After the 1917 Russian Revolution and the failure of the

Western European working class to follow suit, Lenin put forth his thesis on building socialism from below. In order to be successful a new strategy was necessary: Delinking. Only through a State centered policy, controlled by a high command, could a relatively backward country catch up with the more developed capitalist countries.

The notion startled and confused many of the revolutionaries around the world. Lenin's idea was to build socialism in the middle of a capitalist crisis, hoping time would be on the worker's side. Lenin's foresight was amazing taking into account his experience during World War I and what was yet to come: The 1929 financial "crash" and World War II. He did not count on capitalism's ability to fight back and find new energies where apparently none existed.

The USSR after its foundation in 1923 chose delinking as the best option to defend its revolution and to accumulate internally. Before passing away Lenin stood by the peasant-workers alliance that would enable the new State to survive. By the period 1928-1929, however, the class alliance was not solving the crucial growth problems faced by the USSR. Rapid industrialization could only be achieved by transferring profits from the rich peasantry to the new economic strategy. The economy based on "socialist primitive accumulation" became the new battle cry<sup>2</sup>.

## **HISTORICAL DELINKING EXPERIENCES**

Russia's delinking strategy was mainly imposed on her by the central powers and ensuing imperialist policies (internal contradictions). To survive the blockade and military campaigns, the USSR first established an alliance with the small and medium landowners in order to create surplus. Later on it subjected the land-workers to stringent accumulation policies. Throughout its 70 year history, the USSR was forced to compete on uneven grounds with the richer capitalist countries. The arms race finally pulled the rug from under the Soviet regime. The USSR was never able to escape the laws of capitalist accumulation.

The autarchic thesis of socialism in one country was transformed after World War II into an alternative model of growth for all underdeveloped countries. The earlier delinking strategy was abandoned and in its place a new socialist world bloc was proposed to compete with capitalism.

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2 According to Bettelheim, Charles (1978) a new economics based on the idea of a "socialist primitive accumulation", put forth by Preobrazhensky, Evgeni (1971) would call for "the peasantry (to) pay relatively high prices for industrial products and be more or less underpaid for their own produce".

The Chinese Revolution right after World War II seemed to confirm the delinking thesis. China's new leaders rapidly embraced Moscow. However, disputes over peasant worker alliances and agrarian surpluses provoked a split by the end of the 50s. In Latin America, the Cuban Revolution success reinforced the delinking thesis. In order to survive the overwhelming US offensive the Cuban leadership struck an alliance with Moscow. Cuba was able to receive enough petrol and cheap food products (for 30 years) to consolidate its new society.

Using the same containment tactics applied to the USSR and China, the US set up an aggressive isolationist policy towards the Caribbean island. The US developed a dual strategy aimed at destroying all national liberation movements as well as to contain all delinking processes. Firstly, containment was predicated on an anti-communist crusade. Secondly, an inclusive policy was hatched based on development and economic growth recipes. Today's classic example is still W.W. Rostow's book on how to confront communism through capitalist development (Rostow, 1974).

The Dependency theorists in the 60s put forth an alternative that rebukes Rostow's thesis. Its focus centers on capitalist contradictions and limitations. Two lines within the Theory of Dependency are recognized and debated. The first states that countries on the periphery will never be successful if the central powers do not make structural changes. These changes would clear the way for the less developed countries to catch up (Cardoso and Faletto, 1969).

Prebisch understood the relations as uneasy, begging for more autonomy.

By dependence I mean relations between centers and the periphery whereby a country is subjected to decisions taken in the centers, not only in economic matters, but also in matters of politics and strategy for domestic and foreign policies. The consequence is that due to exterior pressure the country cannot decide autonomously what it should do or cease doing. The structural changes bring about an awareness of this phenomena, and this awareness, this desire for autonomy, is one of the integral elements in a critical understanding of the system<sup>3</sup> (Chilcote, 1984).

Chilcote also quotes Osvaldo Sunkel, a renowned critique of development theory, who says that Latin America's

aim is greater autonomy, in order to achieve development without "dependency" and without marginalization. To achieve this goal, the asym-

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3 Chilcote's quote is from Prebisch, Raul (1980).



metrical nature of the present system of international economic relations must first undergo a thorough reform (Sunkel, 1972:517-531).

The second line did not see any possibilities for structural changes and proposed a delinking strategy designed to build new alliances and create conditions for self-centered surplus accumulation<sup>4</sup> (Marini, 1973; Dos Santos, 1977).

We attempt to demonstrate that the dependence of Latin American countries on other countries cannot be overcome without a qualitative change in their internal structures and external relations (Dos Santos, 1970).

In a political perspective, Dos Santos would add that

everything now indicates that what can be expected is a long process of sharp political and military confrontations and a profound social radicalization that will lead these countries to a dilemma: government of force, which opens the way to fascism, or popular revolutionary governments, which open the way to socialism. Intermediate solutions have proved to be, in such a contradictory reality, empty and utopian (Dos Santos, 1970).

There is no doubt that the most successful delinking experiment of the XXth Century was the creation of the Socialist Bloc under Soviet leadership. Although the process was wracked with contradictions, Moscow rarely denied entrance to any Nation-State. Another experience set in motion in a similar direction –with different ideological contents and with less success– was the non-aligned movement.

According to Samir Amin (2000) these experiments were mainly grounded on material objectives, losing perspective of the ideological underpinnings. Material aspects were over dimensioned and super structural elements were not sufficiently stressed.

The strategic objectives of these revolutions involve a disconnection in relation to the logic of the capitalist global expansion. The deployment of these objectives supposes a power based on a social hegemony “national popular” and not a “dictatorship of the proletariat”, as it had been conceived in the Marxist tradition, which recognizes the need to combine, even conflictively, aspirations of capitalists and other socialists character. Progress in achieving these objectives implies, in turn, the gradual and steady progress in the democratization of society both in the practice of management power and in the economy.

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4 For an update on the Dependency debate, Osorio, J. (2005).

An important case that must be studied further is China's post 1949 revolutionary experience. Delinking was an immediate response to US military threats. China's alliance with the USSR enabled Mao followers to defend themselves militarily and to reorganize the economy. By 1972 China was able to establish new relations with the US and other central powers. By the turn of the XXI Century China is considered a rising star capable of becoming the future economic world super power on which capital accumulation can grow unfettered.

China's re-linking has just begun. With strong similarities to the US experience in early XIX Century or German development in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, China seems ready to smash all material and ideological obstacles on its way towards becoming a central player in capitalist accumulation. China seems to be prepared to take the giant step thanks to its work force as well as to its political organization. (Ecologists have their doubts that the Earth can support a new world player –capitalist predator– next to Europe and the US)<sup>5</sup>.

### **THE PERIPHERY'S DELINKING**

Delinking implies a political option taken by a leading social class or class alliance to unshackle the economic and ideological bonds imposed by the core capitalist powers and to seek new avenues towards the creation of self-centered national projects. Are these projects associated with any particular economic system or ideological premise? In other words, is delinking a step towards joining ranks with capitalism or is it supposed to show the road towards socialism?

The present day states successful in their delinking processes are at the center of the capitalist accumulation process. Those who failed are somewhere between the periphery and the semi-periphery. Where will China place itself in the short or medium term? Can Cuba be analyzed in this context?

Capitalism's "periphery" is split into two segments. There is the proper periphery and there is also a semi-periphery. These are difficult categories because they are diffused, expected to describe the movements of Nation-States. The members of the semi-periphery tend to move towards the center, with some self-centered accumulation el-

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5 Others are much more optimist for very different reasons. In a recent newspaper article published in Beijing an observer had this to say: "*Perhaps the strongest reason for optimism (over the region) is that it is no longer true that rising powers must inevitably confront existing powers in either an acrimonious rivalry or in overtly belligerent competition*", said Michael Rich, executive vice-president of Rand Corp, a US-based think tank."

ements. The proper periphery has no accumulation properties with exporting or enclave economies.

The Nation-State system offers a stabilizing effect both on political relations as well as to the accumulation process. The territorial and world market distribution that took place in the XIX Century and the containment policies of the XX Century gave capitalism the needed stability for accumulation. The European Wars during the XIX Century and the XX Century World Wars were necessary in order to make the adjustments between old and new power centers.

The XXI Century will face new and more dangerous confrontations between incumbent central powers and new candidates. Unlike past centuries, the contenders are not concentrated in Europe. Europe along with Russia can become contenders in the next battle confronting US and the Far East (China and Japan). An armed conflict or an ideological struggle of this kind can create conditions for delinking processes at regional levels or on a country basis. Samir Amin asks himself if delinking is viable or adequate at a regional level. Can delinking be the result of one or more leading countries at the periphery? Amin also proposes the possibility of an intermediate road that would lead to a new stage of world capitalist expansion based on the accelerated accumulation of an integrated periphery. (Samir Amin, 1997).

Theotonio Dos Santos (2005) just recently put Brazil's foreign policy in the spot-light presenting the South American country as a new "global player".

Brazil's new international role implies a world trade strategy with new partners. At present Brazil has balanced its foreign trade flow equally among the US, Japan and the rest of Latin America. Brazil's growing trade with China and Asia, as well as its strategic move towards the Arab countries, and its future association with Russia is part of the over-all picture it is sending to the world as a new "Global Player".

Theotonio Dos Santos' approach has very little to do with autarchic strategies. In this sense he shares Samir Amin's (2000) view on the question that relates to delinking and autarchy.

We shall not expand here on the theory of delinking but, to avoid any misunderstanding, say merely that delinking is not synonymous with autarchy but only the subjection of external relations to the logic of internal development (whereas adjustment means binding internal development to the possibilities afforded by the world sys-

tem). In more precise terms, delinking is the refusal to submit to the demands of the worldwide law of value, or the supposed 'rationality' of the system of world prices that embody the demands of reproduction of worldwide capital. It, therefore, presupposes society's capacity to define for itself an alternative range of criteria of rationality of internal economic options, in short a "law of value of national application".

## THE US AND DELINKING

In recent years new world-views have made their way to the top of the best seller lists in the US. Although not truly original, what makes them special is their focus on the future of capitalism, uneven development, and delinking processes. Author Samuel Huntington discovers Gramsci's notion of hegemony to base his theories on the inevitable clash of civilizations and the survival of capitalism. More recently, Thomas Barnett (2004) Professor at the Naval War College (Rhode Island), has sparked controversy by stressing the need to introduce discipline on a world scale in order to subdue conflicts in an expanding capitalist system<sup>6</sup>.

The nature of the system's contradiction require correctives that can deal with threats of dismemberments, to avoid disconnections between its parts that can put the whole in danger. According to Barnett, globalization is not a lineal process and much less an opportunity for less developed countries to catch-up with the richer nations<sup>7</sup>. Barnett agrees with other authors reviewed here that the capitalist system has a center and a periphery<sup>8</sup>. In his particular view, the US stands alone as the center's nucleus. The rest of the developed world is grouped together in a "semi-periphery" status. The periphery is made up of all other Nation-States characterized by their instability, ruled by political dictators and often with enormous natural resources. Under normal conditions, the system has no major problems it cannot solve. However, the center-periphery relationship generates what Barnett calls "collateral damages". These are mainly maverick Nation-States that delink from the capitalist system.

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6 For a further analysis of Barnett's proposals see Ana Esther Ceceña, (2004).

7 See Garcia Arias, (2004) an analyst at ECLA, for a deeper analysis of neo-liberal policies.

8 Barnett rejects Wallerstein's formulation of the concept. In an interview with Martinovich (2004) the political scientist says "As for Wallerstein's brand of watered-down Marxism, let's remember that he posited that the Core needed to keep the Periphery down in order to stay rich. I'm making exactly the opposite argument. If anyone wants to link me to Wallerstein, they better note I turn that now outdated (it worked for a while in the 1970s) argument on its head."

According to Peet (2005)

Barnett describes a binary opposition: on one side there is a functioning core, a wonderful world, where the good stuff is found and the good life lived, with sacred America acting as the beacon of liberty; while on the other side there is the “disconnected gap”, where the bad stuff usually happens, off-grid locations where security problems and instability congregate, dangerous places that constitute a demand pattern for U.S. security exports. This cartography of American enlightenment guides a new attitude toward the world, intensifying the existing sense of global supremacy by expressing it always in optimistic terms, in contrast to terms of eternal lack in the places waiting for freedom to be imposed.

With the collapse of the Socialist Bloc and with China’s relinking, the US has identified a new enemy for the XXI Century. Barnett discards the cultural threats to world order (religions, Islam, and others) and identifies as dangerous all those countries that have delinked as well as those with possibilities of doing so. Peet singles out another glimpse of Barnett’s theory:

The enemy is neither religion (Islam), nor place, but the condition of disconnectedness. To be disconnected in this world is to be isolated, deprived, repressed, and uneducated. For Barnett, these symptoms of disconnectedness define danger. Simply put, if a country was losing out to globalization, or rejecting much of its cultural content flows, chances are that the United States would end up sending troops there. So Barnett thinks that the 1990s revealed neither chaos nor uncertainty, but the defining conflict of our age, a historical struggle that screams out for a new U.S. vision of a future world worth creating. Strategic vision in the United States needs to focus on “growing the number of states that recognize a stable set of rules regarding war and peace” –that is, the conditions under which it is reasonable to wage war against identifiable enemies of “our collective order”.

Barnett divides the system’s center into two parts. Firstly, a country or a region is functional to capitalism if it can manage the flows that integrate national and world economies (ideas, services, money, and media). At a second level, the system is made up of a group of countries or regions that do their best to harmonize their internal laws with dominant global rules of democracy, rule of law and the free market. Countries that are well behaved are those whose requests to join the WTO are accepted. Peet comes to the conclusion that according to Barnett “a country is ‘disconnected’ (delinked) when it fails to gain the confidence of multinational corporations, which limits foreign investment”. Barnett adds that this may be the case,

because the country is a theocracy, is spatially isolated, connected to the world via corrupt state-run telecommunications media, pursues illicit gain, treats its women as birth machines and therefore limits its labor force and export potential, or because it is “blessed” with too many raw materials that constitute its main exports.

Barnett also says “connectedness is kept from appearing in the ‘gap’ (peripheral countries) by wars, leaders who stay too long, and so on”.

Barnett’s book puts forth two interesting proposals to maintain *an Pax Americana* in the XXI Century and neutralize contending alternatives (delinking). To start off with, Barnett suggests that the US should create a Systems Administration Force. This would entail dividing the Pentagon (Defense Department) into two divisions. One division would take care of traditional armed forces and their deployment on a world scale. The other division would take charge of the new Systems Administrative Force with the task of reshaping and guiding all delinked countries<sup>9</sup>. Chet Richards (2005) comments that Barnett’s goal to “perturb” countries that are delinked would be impossible if such a scheme were not in place.

Without such a force, we might –through massive military effort– perturb a Gap country’s system, but we will have no mechanism to steer it into the Core. We are seeing this in Iraq today where the initial surgery on the country was successful, but both the patient and the surgeon may succumb to the post-operative infection.

Barnett’s idea of “perturbing” countries that are delinked (or in the “gap”) is not quite the same as destroying nations or peoples. It is more a question of creating instability and redefining the existing set of rules between Nation-States. Barnett believes that in order to reach full-fledged globalization a third of today’s world population (2 billion persons) would have to be perturbed. In order to reach such a goal the proposed Systems Administrative Force would have to recruit some 20 million persons to work on a global scale on an indefinite basis.

It is worthwhile noting that Barnett predicts the political annexation of the whole Caribbean Basin to the US in the next 50 years. This

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9 The US created an Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization at the State Department, with many of Barnett’s proposals, in August 2004. President George Bush gave a major speech explaining the Office’s mission last May. See George W. Bush, 2005, Supporting Emerging Democracies, Remarks at the International Republican Institute Dinner, Renaissance Hotel, Washington, DC, 17 May, US State Department Web Page.

includes Mexico, Central America, and the northern portion of South America (a population close to 225 million inhabitants). He also foresees a Mexican-born President at the White House by the middle of the XXI Century.

### **A POLYCENTRIC WORLD VS A PERTURBED WORLD**

Barnett's world-view does not deviate much from past capitalist experiences. According to the Professor at the US Naval War College, in order to avoid delinking from the system on behalf of Nation-States or whole regions, a strategy must be set up to defeat any new alternatives. Barnett is very explicit in detailing the consequences these movements could have for the present world order.

Samir Amin's theoretical proposals are precisely what worry US strategists the most. According to Amin, the only alternative open to countries at the periphery is to delink from a system that presents no future to them. If new alternatives appear on the horizon several centers could compete with their own dynamic, creating a polycentric world.

Barnett's proposal contemplates precisely such a scenario. A polycentric world, apparently, would not be tolerated in Barnett's scheme. In order to dampen delinking tendencies, Barnett foresees two forms of perturbations. Those created by central forces in order to destabilize delinked Nation-States or countries that have plans to disconnect from the system. Barnett also mentions the possibility that the center itself can be perturbed by events such as the New York City Twin Towers attacks (Arrighi, 2005)<sup>10</sup>.

A weakness in Barnett's proposal lies in his center-periphery notion placing the former and the semi-periphery in an ironclad alliance. In other words, the center's nucleus and the semi-periphery would be capable of absorbing any autonomous challenge coming from alternative projects. Barnett shares Hardt and Negri's view of a future dominated by a central State capable of maintaining the rule of law on a global scale.

Wood however does not agree with this view of Empire. She considers the arrangements evolving around the "New Imperialism", as a system of Nation-States linked by a global economy but managed by local States, vulnerable to popular and democratic struggles. In a situation of this kind, there is more and more room for opposition movements to expand and exploit the contradictions created by the core's growing demands and its local political allies.

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<sup>10</sup> Arrighi in his article remarks that "scaring hell out of the American people" was highly successful in helping establish US hegemony in the wake of the Second World War, but is now, in all likelihood, helping to bring that hegemony to an end."

Jameson (2000) asks if whole regions or continents can delink from the logic of capitalist accumulation. Apparently, Jameson says, globalization seems irreversible albeit the fact that only a few decades ago a large segment of the world's population belonging to the Socialist Bloc was delinked. Jameson believes that the collapse of the USSR was not due to the failure of socialism but to the fact that the Socialist Bloc abandoned its project of disconnection<sup>11</sup>.

Samir Amin's polycentric world with its multicultural shapes and forms ("national popular social hegemony") can emerge from capitalism's contradictions and face-off with Barnett's permanent perturbed world foreseen by those defenders of a renewed Empire, based on a free market rational. The contradictions that characterize the appearance of new economic and cultural powers, with world hegemonic ideas (imperialism), will also provoke new grass-root movements as well as Nation-State delinking processes. These movements will search for original channels of cooperation capable of setting up new grounds for the building of viable alternatives.

## **LATIN AMERICA**

For 200 years Latin America has been formulating projects that have universal underpinnings. The revolutionary wars fought for independence between 1808 and 1824 put forth a new Nation-State ideology expressed in the writings of Bolivar and others. At the end of that century, Jose Marti put forth a new set of ideas addressing social issues. In the mid XX Century the "Latino-americanists" strived with no avail towards industrial development trying to gear the continent's future towards economic growth through import-substitution policies.

The new national markets created by industrialization gave rise, however, to a belligerent working class as well as to new aspirations on behalf of a local class of entrepreneurs. This "populist" alliance gave hope to a national project based on productivity and equality.

Cuba's 1959 populist revolution was forced by a failed US-led military invasion and a blockade (now in its 44<sup>th</sup> year) to jump over this

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11 Jameson's quote is the following: "Might regions, even whole continents, exclude the forces of globalization, secede, or 'delink' from it?... The aura of doom that seems to hang over globalization's putative irreversibility confronts us with our own inability to imagine any alter-native, or to conceive how 'delinking' from the world economy could possibly be a feasible political and economic project in the first place –and this despite the fact that quite seriously 'delinked' forms of national existence flourished only a few decades ago, most notably in the form of the Socialist bloc. I have taken the unpopular position that the 'collapse' of the Soviet Union was due, not to the failure of socialism, but to the abandonment of delinking by the Socialist bloc."



“phase” of creating the “national market” going straight to a radicalized political process. In the Southern Cone countries of Latin America, populism also led to an inevitable show-down with the US. On the one hand, with regard to Cuba a weaker middle-class existed and, on the other, a very powerful military was organized under US guidance to contain changes and unleash one of the bloodiest political reactions in history. The 1964-1989 military dictatorship’s era first objective was to smash the “populist” alliance and follow up with the destruction of the working class.

The first objective was swiftly accomplished due mainly to the lack of a political commitment on behalf of the middle classes that were not able to coalesce behind the “national project”. The second goal was more difficult due to the essence of capitalist development based on the accumulation of surplus labor. A new strategy was needed to control the worker’s protests and especially their class organizations.

Neo-liberalism was unfolded to enhance capitalist accumulation but more specifically to control workers and their organizations. Deregulation, flexibilization and privatization were the three miracle words in the neo-liberal vocabulary. Globalization entailed a new ideological strategy to weaken the workers and block any class alliances. After the neo-fascist onslaught came to an end, the neo-liberal objective was altered in the 80s: The goal was no longer to submit the working class and destroy its organizations. The new tactic was even more radical: wipe the working class out and make it disappear through globalization. Shrink it in size and make it competitive as well. Presidents like Collor (Brazil), Menem (Argentina), and dictator Pinochet (Chile) were given the task. All three failed miserably and left their countries in shambles.

Since the 90’s a new tactic has been developed. Globalization still means shrinking the size of the working class and making it competitive (squeezing any class solidarity out of it) but a new very important component has been added: Bring the working class into the political equation inviting its political parties to lead the way into globalization. These are apparently the new roles of former working class revolutionary parties such as Brazil’s *PT*, Chile’s *PS*, Argentina’s *Justicialistas*, Uruguay’s *Frente Amplio*. Mexico will probably follow shortly (2006) with *PRD*. Where there are no alternative working class political parties available, a Chavez (Venezuela) will appear and an Evo Morales (Bolivia) will surely be present.

There is an optimistic reading of current events in Latin America. What seems to be a triumph of globalization over local or regional alternatives can give shape, paradoxically, to a new –polycentric– scenario in

the near future. As seen before, Brazil has its own strategy and has been able to block US plans to “perturb” its political ambitions. Argentina has all the promise (a “first world” country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century) and will probably have to back Brazil as the “world player” in the region.

Mexico will probably support with enthusiasm the new regional project once the PRD government takes over in 2006. Chile has always been a wild card but will probably follow Brazil’s leadership in the short run<sup>12</sup>.

Can the US continue controlling events in Latin America as it has done since annexing half of Mexico in 1846? The pessimistic scenario is put forth by US Naval War College Professor Thomas Barnett. (2003) The US is planning on setting new political boundaries with its southern neighbors. The new boundary set by Barnett’s perturbed world by 2050 would be the great Amazon basin in the heart of South America.

No more speculations. Latin America is on the road to new unforeseeable political and social arrangements in the near future. At present they cannot be predicted. However, the world system’s center and/or imperialism’s conflicting interests still foresee a subjugated Latin America. It is up to the Latin Americans to build their own alternatives. To paraphrase Samir Amin (1987):

The challenge will therefore only be taken up by the Latin American peoples, the day that the necessary popular alliances enable them to delink their development from the demands of transnationalization.

Can we conclude asking ourselves, along with all human-kind with whom we share this planet, who are –today– those monsters the Quixote identified 400 years ago as his enemies that must be wiped from the face of the earth?

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12 Secretary Rice was vehement in reminding the Latin American countries the US position in a recent OAS meeting. “We must insist that leaders who are elected democratically have a responsibility to govern democratically. We must act on our Charter to strengthen democracy where it is weak. We must act on our Charter to support democracy where it is threatened. We must act on our Charter to secure democracy with the rule of law.”

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